1. (currently amended) A story branching control method for a video game whose content of ~~the~~ a story is branched in accordance with a player's instruction, comprising the steps of:

providing a branching point selectable by a user ~~on a way of~~ for determining a flow of the story;

receiving a search instructing input for searching for the branching point;

searching for the branching point for a predetermined period of time ~~from~~ after receiving the search instructing input;

~~comparing~~ determining whether the branching point ~~with the point of~~ exists during the predetermined period of time after receiving the search instructing input; and

determining a branch destination of the story in accordance with a success or failure of determining whether the branching point exists during the predetermined period of time ~~the result of the comparing~~.

2. (currently amended) The story branching control method according to claim 1, further comprising the step of:

setting a predetermined variant value for use in ~~a~~ the determination of the branch destination in accordance with the result of the ~~comparing~~ determining whether the branching point exists during the predetermined period.

3. (currently amended) The story branching control method according to claim 2, further comprising the steps of:

counting the incrementing a number of the comparing after the determining step; and

setting a value of the counting incremented number as the predetermined variant value.

4. (original) The story branching control method according to claim 2, further comprising the step of:

determining the branch destination in accordance with the predetermined variant value.

5. (currently amended) The story branching control method according to claim 4, further comprising the step of:

determining the branch destination in accordance with the variant value set by an initial value of a predetermined variant or by in accordance with the result of the comparing determining whether the branching point exists during the predetermined period, when the branching point to have been reached is detected by the flow of story within a period excluding the predetermined period of time.

6. (currently amended) The story branching control method according to claim 1, further comprising the step of:

setting a predetermined flag in accordance with the result of the comparing determining whether the branching point exists during the predetermined period.

3

7. (original) The story branching control method according to claim 6, further comprising the step of:

determining the branch destination in accordance with the predetermined flag.

8. (original) The story branching control method according to claim 1, further comprising the step of:

generating a predetermined search notification signal for notifying the search being made, simply within the predetermined period of time from the search instructing input.

9. (original) . The story branching control method according to claim 1, further comprising the step of:

generating, when the branching point to have been passed is detected by the flow of information within a period excluding the predetermined period of time, a predetermined pass notification signal for notifying the branching point to have been passed.

10. (original) The story branching control method according to claim 9, further comprising the step of:

generating the predetermined pass notification signal, simply when the branching point to have been passed is a predetermined one of whole branching points set on the way of the flow of story.

4

11. (currently amended) A story branching control method for a video game

_₳ c10, 28 - 31_

whose content of ~~the~~ a story is branched in accordance with a player's instruction,

comprising the steps of:

providing a branching point in a flow of the story; and   _c9, 58-60; c22, 1-4_

determining a branch destination in accordance with a predetermined variant

_* c8, 13-15_

value, when having reached the branching point by the flow of the story.   _c8, 40-46;_
_c22, 37-45_

12. (currently amended) A notification signal generating method for a video

game whose content of ~~the~~ a story is branched in accordance with a player's instruction,

comprising the steps of:

providing a branching point in a flow of the story; and

generating, when having passed the branching point by the flow of the story, a

predetermined pass notification signal notifying the branching point to have been passed.

13. (currently amended) The notification signal generating method according to

claim 12, further comprising the step of:

generating the predetermined pass notification signal, simply when the branching

point to have been passed is a predetermined one of whole branching points set on a way

of the flow of the story.

14. (currently amended) A program executing apparatus for executing

processing program whose content of ~~the~~ a story is branched in accordance with a

player's instruction, comprising:

5

search instructing input detecting means for detecting an input of ~~an~~ a search instructing input by ~~a user~~ the player;

searching means for searching for a branching point provided on a way of a flow of the story, for a predetermined period of time from detecting the search instructing input;

~~comparing~~ branch point determining means for ~~comparing~~ determining whether the branching point ~~with the point of~~ exists during the predetermined period of time after detecting the search instructing input; and

branch destination determining means for determining a branch destination of the story in accordance with a success or failure of the branch point determining means in determining whether the branching point exists during the predetermined period of time ~~the result of the comparing~~ .

15. (currently amended) A recording medium having recorded therein a processing program whose content of ~~the~~ a story is branched in accordance with a player's instruction, the ~~video~~ processing program comprising and making a computer execute the steps of:

detecting an input of ~~an~~ a search instructing input by ~~a user~~ the player;

searching for a branching point provided on a way of a flow of the story, for a predetermined period of time from detecting the search instructing input;

~~comparing~~ determining whether the branching point exists during the predetermined period of time after detecting ~~with the point of~~ the search instructing input; and

6

determining a branch destination <u>of the story</u> in accordance with <u>a success or</u>

<u>failure of determining whether the branching point exists during the predetermined period</u>

<u>of time</u> ~~the result of the comparing~~.

16. (currently amended) A <u>computer with a memory storing</u> a processing

program whose content of ~~the~~ <u>a</u> story is branched in accordance with a player's

instruction, <u>the processing program</u> comprising and making ~~a~~ <u>the</u> computer execute the

steps of:

detecting an input of a search instructing input by ~~a user~~ <u>the player</u>;

searching for a branching point provided on a way of a flow of story, for a

predetermined period of time from <u>detecting</u> the search instructing input;

~~comparing~~ <u>determining whether</u> the branching point <u>exists during the</u>

<u>predetermined period of time after detecting</u> ~~with the point of~~ the search instructing input;

and

determining a branch destination <u>of the story</u> in accordance <u>a success or failure of</u>

<u>determining whether the branching point exists during the predetermined period of time</u>

~~with the result of the comparing~~.